

ZIONISM vs. THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Israel's New 'McCarran Act' on Citizenship

By HAL DRAPER

The Nationality Act adopted by the Israel parliament on March 25, and which became law on April 1, once more illustrates the difference between two sentiments which are too often confused: on the one hand, Israeli nationalism, and on the other, Zionist Jewish chauvinism.

It is not any kind of mere Israeli nationalism which rules the state of Israel and its government leaders; this would be as understandable and as "legitimate" as in the case of any other state which is struggling for national existence against difficulties. It is Zionist Jewish chauvinism which has put its stamp upon the new law.

And in doing so it gives aid and comfort to anti-Semitism, it jeopardizes the future of Israel as a nation, it inflames precisely the reactionary forms of Arab nationalism in the Middle East, and it serves to encumber the road to a solution of Israel's pressing economic crisis.

The new Nationality Act does this in two related ways.

(1) It discriminates against non-Jews (mainly Israeli Arabs, of course) by depriving them of citizenship unless they were citizens of Palestine before the establishment of the new state and can prove continuous residence in territory now held by Israel and unless they were included in the official register before January 1, 1952.

(2) It extends the right of immediate citizenship to all Jews of any nationality, permitting them to hold double nationality—in the country from which they have emigrated and in Israel.

This makes sense only from the point of view of the Zionists' ideology, and not from the viewpoint of building a united nation or of easing the situation of Israel as an island-ghetto in an Arab world or of making peace with the Arab world.

The grant of double citizenship and special privilege to Jews of all countries is, of course, not at all required by the desire to make Israeli a haven for Jews oppressed in other lands, who could have no difficulty in becoming Israeli citizens without these special provisions. *What it means is that the peculiarly Zionist aim of the "Ingathering of the Exiles" has been written into the basic law of the state.* Its sponsors openly stated during the debate in the Knesset that it was designed especially to encourage the immigration of Jews from the United States without "burning their bridges behind them" as far as citizenship is concerned. (Though as a matter of fact U. S. law forbids double citizenship.)

Other Side of Anti-Semitism

In writing the "Ingathering of the Exiles" into state law, the Knesset made official the Zionist theory that Jews are "exiles" in an alien land wherever they live, outside of Israel, regardless of their traditions, culture, roots and conditions, and that it is the duty of the "Jewish tribes" everywhere to leave their "exile" and "return." (It was the Israeli Zionists at the last world Zionist congress who spoke in these terms of the Jewish "tribes.")

As William Zukerman, editor of the liberal *Jewish Newsletter*, points out, "it revives a dangerous racist theory that smacks of the slogan of a previous generation, 'A German is a German wherever he is.'"

And further: "this law, passed by a state which calls itself the 'Jewish State,' may be interpreted by some future anti-Semitic government as an invitation to deport its Jews to Israel.

"In any event, such a law strengthens the moral position of the anti-Semites in all countries by confirming their claim that Jews are aliens everywhere, that they cannot become a real part of any country or civilization, except in Israel. Such a law, abysmally false as its theory is, may in an age of propaganda cause irreparable harm to millions of innocent Jews in this and in other countries, who have nothing to do with nationalism in any form and do not even know of the existence of its fantastic claims, and yet may be made to pay the penalty of nationalistic excesses."

Before coming back to this point, we must also make clear what will be the effect of the provisions regarding non-Jews. Like the notorious "grandfather" clauses of Jim Crow laws in the American Southern states, the exact nature of the conditions set for citizenship by Israeli Arabs is not the main point; the point is that, quite beyond a doubt, the conditions have been devised for no other purpose than to exclude the vast majority of Israeli Arabs from nationality in the state. To become citizens, they must be naturalized, even though they and their ancestors have lived in the land longer than its present governors.

It was stated in the Knesset that only about 10 per cent of the native Arab population that lives in Israel can now obtain citizenship under the law. This, and not specific reasons for the specific conditions set, was the intent of the law.

The difference between the Israeli Nationality Act and the aforementioned "grandfather clauses" does not reflect credit on the Israelis. The "grandfather clauses" and their successors today make no official distinction between Negroes and whites.

This is hypocrisy, of course, but, as Samuel Butler said of hypocrisy, it is the homage which vice pays to virtue. The Israeli law pays no homage at all to any democratic concept of citizenship; it is unabashedly chauvinist.

Not only in Israel but also in Zionist circles in this country, opposition to the chauvinist content of Zionism is often assimilated to "anti-Semitism," with approximately the same type of methodology as when anti-Nazism in Hitler Germany was denounced by the regime as "anti-Germanism" or anti-Stalinism is denounced by the Kremlin as treason to the fatherland. Among the victims of this kind of smear campaign have been liberal Jews.

The fact is, however, that the consistent Zionist ideology is bisymmetric with anti-Semitism, and fosters it. Both take as their starting point the view that the Jews are a "peculiar people" who cannot live in harmony with other peoples, that they are an incurably ALIEN element. The ALIENNESS of the Jews is given documentary and legal reinforcement by the extension of automatic double citizenship.

Inflaming Hatreds

The proper commentary upon this with relation to the Israeli Nationality Act has already been made by prominent Jewish anti-Zionist spokesmen. Writing in the *New York Forward* of April 26, Dr. B. Hoffman-Zivion says, beginning with some gentle irony directed against the Zionist habit of excommunicating opponents from the Jewish community:

"If it is the sacred duty of a Jew to say that everything the state of Israel says or does is wise and good, then I will have to say that the Citizenship Law (recently) passed by that state is also wise and good; but if I am permitted to exercise my democratic rights to freedom of opinion, I will surely say that the law passed is very unwise and very unfair. I was even going to say that it is a very unjust law, but was restrained by the fear of being charged with taking sides with the Arabs, which, in this day of raging nationalism, is the greatest of crimes. . . .

"As I have said at the outset, I will not raise the question of justice in connection with this discrimination. I know that the morality of nationalism is generally of the Hottentot kind, holding that 'if I take your wife away from you, it is good; but if you take my wife away from me, then it is bad.' We holler murder when someone discriminates against us, but we think it perfectly in order for us to discriminate against others. But should we not take into consideration that only a small portion of the Jewish people lives in the Jewish land, while the bulk of Jews live among other peoples? . . .

"Our perennial cry against the 'Goyim' has been that they discriminate against Jews, and we have always felt that it was a just cry. Can we feel about it the same way now? Could they not come back at us and say: 'And are you Jews better people? Are you not, in fact, discriminating against the non-Jews who live in your land?'"

A similar point is made by the assistant professor of sociology at New York University, Dr. Israel Knox, writing in the *Jewish Socialist Vecker* (May 1):

"Israeli's new citizenship law which has now been accepted by the Knesset is undemocratic and non-Jewish because it is a denial of the sacred rights of [morality]. The worst of the law is the part which deals with the approximately 170,000 Arabs in Israel. Logically, these Arabs whose fathers and forefathers lived in Palestine for hundreds of years should be considered equal with Jews in the privilege of immediate citizenship. But reason is one thing and nationalistic fanaticism is something else. . . .

"Behind that law burns the fire of nationalistic chauvinism, and who will gain by this law? It will certainly play into the hands of the Communists. It will place mountains of obstacles on the road to peace with the Arab states without which Israel is sentenced to a tragically uncertain existence. The law must and will inflame the hatred in the Middle East and will destroy the loyalty of the more moderate Arabs in Israel. Certainly, it will not add to the health of the Jewish communities outside of Israel, especially in the United States, which must fight for liberal immigration laws. Why should Senator McCarran be better than Ben-Gurion? Why should Lehman, young Roosevelt and Celler get from the American Congress what Israel does not do in its own country?"

Our report (last week's LABOR ACTION) on the McCarran Immigration bill detailed the anti-Semitic themes which even came out in speeches by congressmen in support of that reactionary measure. The Israeli version of McCarranism can only fan those flames.

But the most serious long-term disability of the new law is the one stressed by Dr. Knox—that it intensifies the Arab-Jewish cold war in the Middle East precisely at a time when even the reactionary Arab leaders have been reduced to pressing one main demand, the question of the Arab refugees. It is a slap in the face for all the Arab people and can only serve to push them closer to the rulers with whom they are saddled. At the same time that the hope of Arab-Jewish peace, which is essential to the economic well-being of the state of Israel, is pushed further away, Israel has to devote more and more of its inadequate resources to the crushing burden of armaments, which oppress the Israeli Jews also and make their lot bitter.

The unwisdom of the law is the other side of its injustice. It is a blow against the possibility of a new life for the Jews who fled to Israel to escape persecution at home; it is a blow against the safety and national defense of its sovereignty by the state of Israel; and it is a blow necessitated only by the reactionary aspirations of Zionism, which thus sets itself against the interests of the Jewish people of the whole world.